



The Meaning of Melody: Remarks on the Performance-Based Analysis of Bosniac Epic Song.

Citation

Elmer DF, Bonifazi A. 2012. The Meaning of Melody: Remarks on the Performance-Based Analysis of Bosniac Epic Song. In *Child's Children: Ballad Study and Its Legacies*, eds. Harris J, Hillers B, 233-247. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier.

Published Version

<http://www.wvttrier.de/top/beschreibungen/ID1294.html>

Permanent link

<http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:34308889>

Terms of Use

This article was downloaded from Harvard University's DASH repository, and is made available under the terms and conditions applicable to Open Access Policy Articles, as set forth at <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:dash.current.terms-of-use#OAP>

Share Your Story

The Harvard community has made this article openly available.
Please share how this access benefits you. [Submit a story](#).

[Accessibility](#)

ANNA BONIFAZI AND DAVID F. ELMER

The Meaning of Melody: Remarks on the Performance-Based Analysis of Bosniac Epic Song

Among the most important of Francis James Child's legacies at Harvard was the establishment of a precedent for the collection of folklore as a serious academic pursuit (see Bynum). One of his greatest heirs and successors in this regard was Milman Parry, assistant professor of Classics at Harvard from 1929 until his death in 1935. In the mid-1930s Parry set out on an epoch-making expedition in what was then the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, looking for contemporary traditions of sung narrative that could elucidate certain problems of fundamental importance for the study of Homeric poetry, his primary interest. Equipped with a pair of portable phonographs, and with a metric ton of blank aluminum phonograph discs in his luggage, Parry set out to document as completely as possible the oral traditions, and especially the oral *epic* traditions, of that nation's Catholic, Muslim, and Orthodox inhabitants. His recordings now constitute the core of the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature.¹ In this contribution, we would like to illustrate the value of Parry's collection for the broader study of performed narrative by discussing one of these recordings, which also constitutes the subject-matter of a more comprehensive, ongoing project.² Through careful study of this recording, we hope to contribute to an understanding of how performative features—manipulations of the vocal melody, the timbre of the voice, and rhythm—interact with textual features of this epic song, and how they contribute to its meaning. We have selected for study the song “Halil Hrnjičić and Miloš the Highwayman” (PN 662), which tells of how the Muslim hero Halil Hrnjičić rescued his sister from the Christian villain Miloš Keserdžija, performed by Alija Fjuljanin, a

¹ The Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature is housed in Room C of Harvard's Widener Library. In addition to Parry's recordings, transcriptions, and notebooks, the Collection also includes important subsidiary collections assembled by Albert B. Lord, James Notopoulos, David Bynum, and other researchers.

² We are completing an extended performative and pragmatic commentary on the song discussed here.

Muslim of Albanian descent from the region around Novi Pazar.³ Figure 1 shows Fjuljanin in 1934, the year the song was recorded.

[Photograph in attached file]++++

**Figure 1. Alija Fjuljanin in 1934.
(Photograph courtesy of the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature.)**

Like Milman Parry, we are drawn to the South Slavic epic tradition by its many formal similarities—on paper, at least—to the tradition represented in Greek by the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. As far as Homer is concerned, the lack of recordings and the unavailability of there-and-then informants hinder our understanding of the Homeric performances as a communicative whole, that is, including both verbal and non-verbal means of expression. The lack of direct access to Homeric performance has pushed scholars to explore in greater and greater detail the verbal surface of the Homeric texts as a source of information about the performers' organization of discourse and their attitudes towards what they say. The desire to extract information about performance from textual features explains the flourishing, in recent decades, of theoretical frameworks and methods adapted from the disciplines of discourse analysis, pragmatics, and cognitive psychology, along with folkloric and anthropological

³ Each document in the Parry Collection bears an individual catalog number; documents collected by Parry are prefixed by the abbreviation "PN" ("Parry Number"). In addition, each side of Parry's discs bears an individual serial number. The recording of Fjuljanin's performance and a transcription made by Parry's assistant, Nikola Vujnović, may be accessed through the "Collection Database" on the website of the Milman Parry Collection (<http://chs.harvard.edu/mpc>). Quotations from Fjuljanin's song will be identified with reference to a particular disc side and timing on that disc.

studies.⁴ The South Slavic epic tradition arguably shows comparable linguistic strategies enacted to mark discourse structure (see Elmer for one set of examples). Correlating these with performative features—that is, non-verbal features related to the musical performance—could in principle produce results worthy of consideration by Homerists as well. Although similarities at the linguistic level do not necessarily imply similarities in the manner of performance, it is our conviction that the South Slavic epic singer faces many of the same problems that confronted the singer of Homeric epic, and that the solutions he devises can suggest the kinds of solutions an ancient rhapsode might have devised.

In fact, a common set of problems confronts performers in every tradition of extended, orally composed and performed narrative. These problems cluster around the need to articulate the narrative in such a way as to facilitate recall on the part of the performer and comprehension on the part of the listener. This need is naturally present in all narrative traditions, but it is the more acutely felt when the narrative approaches epic dimensions and the amount of detail encompassed by the song pushes the memory of the performer and the attention of the audience to their limits. This is especially true when the performance medium lacks any regularly-recurring, large-scale formal structures that might serve as a framework for articulation of the narrative. Ballads typically exhibit a stanzaic pattern, in which ideas are presented through a series of recurring formal structures at a scale intermediate between that of the verse and that of the song as a whole. The formal boundaries between these recurring units help both singer and audience to track progress through the song. In the South Slavic, as in the Homeric, tradition, however, there are no such recurring formal features beyond the level of the individual verse. South Slavic epic song is a stichic medium, in which the rhythm and the melody generally repeat line after line.⁵ As a result, the narrative is not articulated in any prescribed or predetermined way. Features that index the singer's progress through the contents of his memory are present, as we will see, but they are not regularly recurring, nor are they regularly expected by the

⁴ See, for example, de Jong; Foley, *Traditional Oral Epic; Homer's Traditional Art*; and *How to Read*; Bakker, *Poetry in Speech and Pointing at the Past*; Minchin; Bonifazi. Useful general works on discourse analysis are Johnstone and Widdowson; for pragmatics, see Levinson and Mey; for the cognitive psychology of language production, see Chafe.

⁵ Both melody and metrical form repeat line by line, but there is an interesting disjunction between the two in the particular tradition to which Fjuljanin belongs. Metrically, there is an avoidance of word-break between the ninth and tenth syllables of each 10-syllable line. In performance, however, there is a pause between the ninth and tenth syllables, so that the melodic pattern essentially extends from the tenth syllable of one line to the ninth syllable of the next.

audience. Such a medium presents hazards to performer and audience alike, since it is, so to speak, a landscape that is potentially without landmarks for orientation—until and unless the performer contrives to create them.

The landmarks the performer does create will function at one and the same time as signposts for the audience and as indicators of the singer's own efforts to organize his thoughts and present them in the form of song. These two functions converge by virtue of the fact that, like language in general, the language of performance is the means by which the thought of the performer is translated into the thought of the auditor.⁶

The landmarks created by a performer highlight particular moments. They indicate that these moments are invested with significance in the performer's mind, and that the performer feels it important to communicate this significance to his audience. In thinking about *why* certain events are invested with significance in this way, we have found it helpful to think of such landmarks as fulfilling two notionally distinct functions. *Narrative* landmarks provide guidance on the level of the story and its narration: they single out significant developments in the action and help to differentiate component parts of the song, for instance direct speech and narration. *Emotional* landmarks provide guidance on the level of evaluation: they mark events of particular emotional or ethical interest, and thus facilitate not just the comprehension of the narrative, but its interpretation (a metanarrative function). It must be stressed, however, that this distinction is only a notional one. It is useful insofar as it brings out the fact that landmarks function on both the narrative and metanarrative levels. In actual practice, narration—or, better, the act of narrating—cannot be disjoined from its emotional framing.

The performer has essentially two means of creating such landmarks. He can manipulate either the words of the song or the musical features of its performance. We have isolated a set of verbal and performative features that we feel are likely to provide points of orientation for the audience, or indicators of the singer's efforts to organize his thoughts and present them in the form of song. At the level of the text, we have taken our guidance from the linguistic sub-disciplines of discourse analysis and pragmatics in choosing to focus on a class of words termed "discourse markers." "Discourse markers" are words that do not contribute to the semantic content of an utterance, but serve to mark boundaries in discourse; they signal the speaker's

⁶ Cf. Bakker, "Discourse and Performance" 3: "the properties of spoken discourse that show most clearly how speech is produced in the mind of the speaker are at the same time the most crucial in what the speech effects, as an event, in the mind of the listener."

intention to make a transition from one discourse act to another.⁷ Words like “well,” “so,” “anyway,” “actually,” are examples of common discourse markers in English.⁸ In the context of an epic song, discourse markers might indicate a change in topic or focus, a transition from narration to direct speech, or, more generally, the boundary between distinct discourse acts. Discourse markers thus provide a lexical means for marking important points of articulation in the narrative.

At the level of the performance, we have singled out a number of features that we refer to collectively as “performative discontinuities.” The tradition to which Fjuljanin belongs permits a fairly wide degree of variation and flexibility, but we can speak of a “discontinuity” whenever the variation is pronounced enough to stand out from its surrounding context. The context is shaped by a basic melodic contour that, in keeping with the stichic patterning of the medium, repeats more or less line by line. Each melodic phrase has a discernible base tone, which is often (but by no means always) the tone on which the phrase settles at its conclusion. Unlike typical Western melodic patterns, the range of the vocal melody seldom extends higher than a third—and even a third is a noticeable enough departure from the default melody to register as a discontinuity. The melody normally progresses through chromatic, or even smaller, intervals.⁹ The instrumental accompaniment, provided by a bowed, one-stringed instrument called a *gusle*, generally follows the vocal patterns. To listeners unfamiliar with the tradition, South Slavic epic song often seems musically monotonous. This is largely because, within this tradition, the text takes precedence over melody: words are foregrounded, music backgrounded.¹⁰ However, once one has familiarized oneself with the conventions and expectations of the medium, significant variations become readily apparent.

⁷ Hannay and Kroon describe discourse acts as “distinct steps which the language producer executes as a result of strategic planning in order to realize her communicative intention” (121). Accordingly, a great variety of discourse acts can be signaled in discourse, including comments on events just told, commands, exclamations, visual descriptions of events or components of events, the introduction of a reported speech into a narrative, or the subsequent return to the narrative.

⁸ A seminal monograph on discourse markers in English is Schifffrin. Relevant works on the topic are collected in Jucker and Ziv and in Fischer. Particularly relevant to our project is Norrick, which focuses on discourse markers in oral narratives.

⁹ Quarter tones are regularly employed (cf. Bartók and Lord 4). This is one reason why it is not easy for first-time listeners to detect variations in stichic patterns, timbre, or tone of voice.

¹⁰ Rhythm and tempo provide one indication of the subordinate position of music within this tradition: the rhythmic pulse is extremely variable, regular sequences of rhythmic beats being the exception rather than the rule.

We identify six major discontinuities in the vocal performance; these will shortly be illustrated with examples. The first three—“peaks,” “curves,” and base tone shifts—concern the vocal melody proper. We apply the term “peak” to an upward movement of a fourth or more away from the established base tone; such large intervals occur at the start of the line and usually do not extend beyond the initial syllable, which gives the impression of a marked “peak” at the start of the verse. Less striking, but still noticeable enough to be potentially useful as an attention-getting device, are melodic “curves,” which are characterized by a shallower movement of a major or minor third that extends across several syllables and returns gradually to the base tone. “Curves” generally occur after the initial syllable, giving the line a gently rising and falling contour. “Peaks” may thus sometimes be followed by “curves.” Base tone shifts are self-explanatory: the singer periodically modulates between two base tones, which are approximately a half step apart. Two further discontinuities involve manipulations of the voice that do not belong to melody in the strict sense: these are the use of falsetto on the one hand, and on the other, a variety of adjustments of the timbre of the voice, which we group together under the label of “parlando” effects. Finally, the singer will occasionally adjust the rhythm or tempo of a verse or part of a verse in a way that seems to us significant.

In order to track Fjuljanin’s use of lexical and performative markers, we have devised a system for marking up the text that allows one quickly and easily to observe the interaction of all the salient features of the performance. Discourse markers and other significant verbal features are printed in boldface.¹¹ Peaks and curves are highlighted in a darker and a lighter shade of grey, respectively. Shifts of the base tone are indicated by an upward or downward arrow in the margin. Falsetto and parlando are both represented by a box enclosing the affected syllables: a solid line is used for the former, a broken line for the latter. Significant disruptions of the tempo or rhythm are marked by underscoring. Finally, in order to represent the important distinction between direct speech and narration, we print direct speech in italics. Figure 2 presents an overview of this system.¹²

Discourse markers or significant verbal features	
Peak	
Curve	

¹¹ In addition to discourse markers in the strict sense, we are also tracking exclamations, rhetorical questions, and direct addresses to the listener, since these expressions often mark boundaries between discrete elements of the song.

¹² Two other conventions of our transcription require comment. A dash (—) indicates a particularly long pause between the ninth and tenth syllables of the line. Parentheses indicate that the last syllable has been omitted altogether.

Shift of base tone ↑↓
Falsetto
Parlando
Disruption of rhythm / tempo
<i>Direct speech</i>

Figure 2. Key to graphic conventions used in transcriptions.

It must be stressed that none of the discourse markers or performative discontinuities we are tracking has a single, consistent function in Fjuljanin's singing. For example, although Fjuljanin often uses a melodic peak to mark the shift either to or from direct speech, there are many shifts that are not so marked, and there are many peaks that serve other functions. That is, there is no strict grammar governing the use of either lexical or performative markers. Rather, all the features just mentioned belong to a repertory of techniques that the singer may use as he wishes, for a variety of effects. Moreover, that repertory and the use the singer makes of it are matters of his distinctive idiolect. There are general patterns of usage that belong to the performative language of the South Slavic tradition as a whole, and to the regional dialect in which Fjuljanin performs, but at the level of analysis at which we are working, we are dealing with the distinctive features of Fjuljanin's personal style. What he shares with other singers are the set of problems sketched at the beginning of this paper and the availability of a wide range of performative solutions; the particular solutions he chooses, however, are a matter of his distinctive voice as a singer. As an example of such distinctions in personal style, we may take Fjuljanin's not infrequent use of melodic peaks to mark the shift from narrative to direct speech. Avdo Međedović, perhaps the most famous singer recorded by Parry and Lord, sometimes marked the same transition in a very different way, by abandoning song and switching to spoken delivery. By means of such differences the singers establish for themselves personalized styles of performance.

Before discussing specific instances from Fjuljanin's performance of "Halil Hrnjičić and Miloš the Highwayman", it will be useful to have the overall plot of the song in mind:

Ninety "Turkish" (that is, Muslim) warriors make camp on a mountain. Mujo, their leader, has an ominous dream and realizes that their town, Kladuša, has been attacked by Hungarians. Mujo's comrade Osman, arriving from Kladuša bloody and disfigured, tells Mujo about the attack and about the kidnapping of Mujo's sister, Ajkuna, by a mysterious rider. Mujo recognizes the rider as Miloš the Highwayman. He has sworn an oath not to seek combat with Miloš, but his brother Halil declares that he will rescue Ajkuna. Halil departs for the Christian city of Lendar and seeks out the priest Milovan, who is bound to Mujo by *kumstvo* (a kind of ritualized reciprocity). Milovan is away from home when Halil arrives, but he is received by the priest's daughter Anđelija, who makes sexual advances. Milovan appears and reluctantly agrees to bring Halil to the residence of the

ban (the local governor), where they expect to find Ajkuna. Miloš is present at the *ban*'s residence and recognizes Halil; Milovan intercedes with the *ban* to prevent Miloš from killing him, and the two depart without achieving their objective. Milovan and Halil then meet the inn-keeper Ruža, also bound to Mujo, who helps them reach Ajkuna by way of a stratagem. Halil, Ruža, Ajkuna and the daughter of the *ban* flee. Miloš sets out to capture and kill Halil, but when he catches up with the group, Halil kills him (the *ban*'s daughter has previously rendered Miloš's weapons unusable). Halil returns to Kladuša and plants Miloš's head on a gate where his brother Mujo can see it, in order to frighten him by suggesting that Miloš is still alive. The trick succeeds, and Mujo is terrified.

Fjuljanin ends his performance abruptly with a description of Halil's laughter at his brother's distress.

The very beginning of Fjuljanin's performance illustrates what we mean by "narrative landmarks." The singer begins with a formulaic prayer, and then shifts in line 7 to the narrative proper, which follows Mujo's raiding party from the gates of Udbina to Mount Jadika, where Mujo addresses his comrades¹³:

a vikni	druže nam pomogni Bože	
amin...	[unintelligible]	
pomognuti pa razgovoriti		
a ljepu ni sreću podvojiti		
mir i zdravlje od boga veselje		5
mi veljimo hoće ako bogda	↑	
jedno jutro što je osamnulo		
osamnulo ogrijalo sunce		
tek udbinjska pokljeknu kapija		10
na kapiju četa navaljila		
četa mala devedeset druga		
e ko beše četi četobaša		
četobaša Mujo na đogina		
e okrenu poljom zeljenijem		
a za njime Arnaut Osmane		15
Osman nosi bajrak u rukama		
za Osmanom devedeset druga		
pa otoše poljom zeljenijem	↓	
e zeljeno polje preturiše		
a hevo hi gori i plani—ni	↑	20
i planine redom preturahu		
Bukovicu pa Orahovicu	↓	
Brešljen goru i Ogorelicu		
dok dođoše Jadiki planini		
kad su došli Jadiki planini		25

¹³ Following the practice of Parry's assistant Nikola Vujnović, on whose transcriptions our own are based, we do not punctuate the text. This method has the advantage of revealing how discourse boundaries are marked by performative and linguistic features.

tu hi bijel danak ostavijo
 tavana noć je svijet ufatila
 evo Mujo društvu govori
braćo moja devedeset druga
sad ni nema šetnje planinama 30
da mi noćas ode konaćimo
 e kad začu društvo serdarevo
 složni bilji pa se nasuljili
 (disc 1087, 00:46-03:19)

But cry out, friend, "God, help us!"
 Amen . . .
 May he help us and cheer us
 and bestow on us good cheer.
 Peace and health are a joy vouchsafed by God. 5
 We say: "it will be so, if God wills."
 One morning when dawn came,
 when dawn came and the sun grew warm,
 just then the gates of Udbina opened.
 A raiding party rushed through the gate, 10
 a small raiding party of 90 comrades.
 Hey, who was the captain of the raiding party?
 The captain was Mujo on his white horse.
 Hey, he set out across the green plain,
 and after him was Osman the Albanian. 15
 Osman carries the banner in his hands.
 After Osman the 90 comrades.
 And they went off through the green plain,
 and they crossed the green plain.
 But here they are in the mountain highlands; 20
 and they crossed the mountains one after another:
 Bukovica and Orahovica
 Mount Brešljen and Ogorelica,
 until they came to Mount Jadika.
 When they came to Mount Jadika, 25
 here the bright daylight left them,
 dark night caught hold of the earth.
 Here Mujo spoke to the company:
 "My brothers, my 90 comrades,
 now we cannot walk in the mountains, 30
 let us camp here for the night."
 Hey, when the *serdar*'s company heard this,
 they agreed and gave consent.

This passage shows three major performative discontinuities, which correspond to three narrative landmarks, namely, the start of the song, the transition from the

formulaic opening to the narrative proper, and the shift from the first instance of direct speech back into the narrative.

Two features of this selection merit special comment. Firstly, it is notable that the singer shifts into the narrative in two distinct steps, each of which bears a distinct marker. In lines 7 and 8, he sets the scene by referring to the sunrise “one morning,” which corresponds to the orientation function in Labov’s framework (Labov 364-365). This very formulaic opening is marked by a shift in the base tone. The first actual event of the narrative occurs only in line 9, with the opening of the city gates; this event is marked both by a melodic peak and by the discourse marker *tek* “just (then).” Also noteworthy is the way the singer uses a variety of discontinuities to draw our attention to the details about the raiding party and its journey to Jadika. The curves at lines 15 and 17 highlight the different personnel that make up Mujo’s party. Other rhythmic and melodic effects (curves, shifts of base tone, a tempo adjustment at line 19) provide a sense of movement as the narrative tracks the group from Udbina to the mountain. Furthermore, a certain flexibility emerges in the distribution of performative and lexical markers, which may be used independently or in conjunction to mark particular landmarks. In line 9, for instance, the introduction of the first actual event of the story is marked both by a performative and by a lexical marker (melodic peak + *tek*); conversely, important narrative steps are signaled by melodic curves alone at lines 15 and 17, and at line 12 by the verbal expression *e ko beše četi četobaša* (“Who was the captain of the raiding party?”). Direct questions such as these are a formulaic way of introducing new information and of shifting thereby from one topic (here, the raiding party) to another, more important one (Mujo).

A second example illustrates Fjuljanin’s treatment of moments of heightened emotional interest—what we have termed “emotional landmarks.” When Mujo’s brother Halil arrives at the home of the priest Milovan, he is welcomed by the priest’s daughter, Anđelija. Halil—who has a traditional reputation as a ladies’ man—has already been warned by Mujo not to make any passes at the girl. But when the girl herself offers Halil a drink and begins to flirt with him, it seems momentarily as though his resolve might waver. This is a moment of great emotional investment: the protagonist’s character is being put to the test by a woman of questionable virtue. One measure of that investment is the density of performative markers in this passage.

no što kaže Mujagin Halile

kumo moja popova devojko

đe je mene stari kumašine

kumašine pope Milovane

470

no što velji lijepa devojka

o čuli me Mujagin Haljile

ode nije pope Milutine

otišo je pope po nuriji

neće doći tri mjeseca dana

475

uh kad Haljil sabra lakrdiju
tek se stade crnjo pomerati
vi devojke fištila je guja
 đe mu daje vino i rakiju
 ponajprije cura posrkuje 480
pa posljenke dodaje Halji(lu)
 da je njemu slade piti vi(no)
 i to joj se malo učinelo
 kako bliže pa se primaćije
 a na krilo dupe naticu(je) 485
 od sebe je Haljil odgurkuje
 mič se curo ***grom te pogodi***
~~mene nije do tvoga šikljan~~(ja)
 drugi su me jadi pogodi—lji
 a nesmijem kumstvo ištetiti 490
no što cura govori Halilu
 (disc 1095, 02:10-03:46)

But what does Mujo's Halil say?
 "My *kuma*, daughter of the priest,
 where is my old dear *kum*,
 my dear *kum* Father Milovan?" 470
 But what does the lovely girl say?
 "Oh, hear me, Mujo's Halil,
 Father Milutin is not here,
 the Father has gone to visit his parish,
 he will not return for three months." 475
 Oh! when Halil understood these words
 just then that black one began to move away.
 But look at the girl—may a serpent devour her—
 how she gives him wine and brandy.
 First the girl sips it, 480
 then afterward she gives it to Halil
 so that he finds the wine sweeter to drink.
 And that seemed little enough to her.
 When she moves herself closer
 and slides her bottom into his lap, 485
 Halil pushes her from him.
 "Get away, girl, may lightning strike you!
 I don't care for your friskiness;
 other woes have afflicted me,
 and I cannot offend against my *kum*." 490
 But what did the girl say to Halil?

¹⁴ Fj luljanin sings *Milutine* for *Milovane* by mistake.

We draw the reader's attention to the curves in lines 479 and 480, culminating in a peak at the moment that the girl hands Halil the cup of wine; the timbre variations that mark her flirtatious body language in lines 484-85; and finally the remarkable set of performative discontinuities in Halil's protest at lines 487-90. These last few lines are a good illustration of the fact that emotional investment is often marked by an increased degree of mimeticism in direct speech. This is particularly clear in line 488, where the momentary pause in the instrumental accompaniment, the disruption of the rhythmic pulse, and the use of a *parlando* effect reduce the musical stylization and approach the character of actual speech. There is also mimeticism in lines spoken in the narrator's voice. The singer's distaste for the loose behavior of the Christian girl is detectable in the timbre he adopts in lines 484 and 485.

It is important to note that the emotional investment expressed in these lines is marked as much by lexical markers as by performative ones. The conjunction *pa* "and (then)" in line 481 articulates progress toward the climactic moment of Halil's drinking, while the very common exclamatory expression *grom te pogodijo* "may a thunderbolt strike you!" (line 487) in the mouth of Halil underscores his protest lexically and semantically.¹⁵ The reinforcement of performative discontinuities—usually shaping the initial part of the line—by the co-occurrence of verbal markers is particularly evident in the case of the "falsetto."¹⁶ Single words, particularly interjections, are sometimes performed in unnaturally high tones. The singer tends to use this device to mark the shift between direct speech and narration, or to accentuate remarkable turns of event. In the passage discussed above, for example, *uh* "oh!" (line 476) in falsetto signals the end of direct speech, and simultaneously orients the listeners' attention forward, that is, it elicits attention to Halil's reaction, which in turn will trigger the seduction scene. In short, Fjuljanin's use of falsetto shows that melody and lexicon may converge in the same act of discourse-marking.

Two final examples may widen the picture of mimeticism and emotional investment as expressed by performative discontinuities. We have suggested that one of the most important distinctions in this tradition is that between direct speech and narration. There is considerable pressure on the performer to mark this distinction performatively since it is a crucial one for understanding the song and yet often not marked lexically. Nevertheless, at certain moments of particular emotional intensity, this distinction can actually be elided. On such occasions something very close (but

¹⁵ The function of conjunctions as discourse markers is widely discussed in the literature on pragmatics and discourse analysis.

¹⁶ The line-initial position of many performative discontinuities and verbal markers might be connected to an analogous tendency of spoken language, namely, the statistically high average of intonation peaks at the beginning of a topical unit. On the prosody of clause beginnings, see in particular Wichmann 24-48.

not identical) to what in written texts would be called “free indirect discourse” emerges. That is, it can become very difficult to determine whether a particular utterance represents the voice of the narrator or the direct speech of one of the characters, both of which can carry an emotional charge that is expressed performatively.

Among the emotional high points that punctuate the early part of Fjuljanin’s song are two interrelated moments of recognition, in which Ajkuna’s brothers—first Mujo and then Halil—come to a realization about her abductor. In each case the realization is introduced by a formulaic simile comparing the brother in question, distressed by the intuition of calamity, to a bird. First Mujo recognizes the identity of his sister’s abductor:

pa zakuku baš ka kukavica 305
 a previja kako lastavica
kuku njemu danas do vijeka
pa ja znadem ko je i kako je
 (disc 1092, 01:59-02:09)

And he began to cry out like a cuckoo bird 305
 and he trembled like a swallow.
 “Woe to him today and forever!
 I know who he is and what he’s like . . .”

Fjuljanin employs two distinct signals to indicate the transition from narrative to direct speech. The first is the double comparison to a cuckoo and a swallow, a highly traditional figure that frequently introduces the quoted lament of a character in distress. The second is the performative curve marking the beginning of Mujo’s speech, which opens with an emotional curse on the abductor, Miloš.

These same two signals are deployed a short time later, when Halil examines the earth for signs of Miloš’s party and realizes that they have long since made good their escape. Now, however, the status of the words that follow the simile is far less clear:

e kad vide Boži nesretni(će)
tek zakuka baš ka kukavica
 a previja kako lastavica
prošli behu pa davno Mađa—ri
 u to Halku stasala družina 355
 (disc 1093, 01:10-01:30)

Hey, when God’s unfortunate one saw this,
 just then he began to cry out like a cuckoo bird
 and he trembled like a swallow.

The Hungarians had passed long ago!
At this the company caught up with Halil. 355

Fjuljanin employs a pluperfect verb (*prošli behu* “they had passed”) to express the substance of Halil’s realization. Had he used a perfect form, line 354 would most naturally be understood as a direct quotation of Halil’s words. The pluperfect, however, expresses a “displacement of self”: it indicates that the utterance corresponds to the point of view of someone other than the speaker, who must therefore be the narrator.¹⁷ And yet the presence of the bird simile and the prominent melodic peak create the countervailing impression that the singer means here, as before, to capture the actual words of Halil. That is to say, the various lexical and performative markers deployed at this moment of heightened emotional interest are in fact in conflict.

The overall effect of this apparent contradiction is to blur the line between direct speech and narration. At a climactic moment in his song, Fjuljanin contrives to collapse a distinction fundamental to his medium, and to merge his voice with that of his characters. His manipulation of lexical and performative markers establishes a tension between possible interpretations that bears a striking resemblance to “free indirect discourse.” While this technique is widely thought to be peculiar to written discourse, we see here that the extra dimensions of meaning supplied by performative elements can create similar effects even in an oral medium.

The preliminary investigation presented here suggests some initial conclusions, which concern various strategies enacted by the singer in order to help listeners effectively process larger and smaller narrative steps in the performance. These strategies facilitate the performer’s recall of his material as well as its articulation for the benefit of the audience. Moments of the story constituting narrative and/or emotional landmarks turn out often to be marked by melodic and lexical features. One major result of our analysis is the observation that the performance shows a fundamental flexibility in the managing of melody and words, narration and emotion. Melodic discontinuities may mark both narrative and emotional landmarks at the performative level: peaks, for example, can signal both the beginning of a discourse unit and an emotionally crucial moment of the story. Likewise, lexical phrases may mark narrative and emotional landmarks at the pragmatic level: the interjection *uh* “oh!” can signal both the end of direct speech and excited anticipation of the upcoming action. There is no *a priori* dividing line between performative and verbal features with respect to discourse function or emotional investment. Their use can be

¹⁷ We borrow the notion of “displacement of self” from Chafe (200; 210; 249). In conversational language, consciousness of events displaced in time and space may be reflected either in first-person or in third-person narration. The former shows simple “spatiotemporal displacement;” the latter involves in addition “a different represented self” (Halil’s represented thought, in our case).

unpredictably interchangeable. Such flexibility arguably matches the lack of pre-determined regularly-recurring formal structures in this genre. It also permits the display of individual style and bravura through the sophisticated use of different performative devices. A remarkable example of the possibilities opened up by the singer's manipulation of melody and lexicon is a phenomenon similar to "free indirect discourse": the performer ambiguously intrudes into a character's emotional state. The distinction between character and singer as the source of an utterance is blurred; so, too, is the distinction between narration and emotional evaluation. If we consider generally the production of meaning in this song, we may say that the performative unfolding of the communicative event plays a crucial role. Far from being an ornament or a supplement, melody in particular seems to be a primary channel of communication. It is a way of meaning.

Works Cited

- Bakker, Egbert J. "Discourse and Performance: Involvement, Visualization and 'Presence' in Homeric Poetry." *Classical Antiquity* 12 (1993): 1-29.
- . *Poetry in Speech: Orality and Homeric Discourse*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1997.
- . *Pointing at the Past: from Formula to Performance in Homeric Poetics*. Washington, DC: Center for Hellenic Studies and Harvard UP, 2005.
- Bartók, Béla and Albert Bates Lord. *Serbo-Croatian Folk Songs: Texts and Transcriptions of Seventy-Five Folk Songs from the Milman Parry Collection, and a Morphology of Serbo-Croatian Folk Melodies*. New York: Columbia UP, 1951.
- Bonifazi, Anna. "Memory and Visualization in Homeric Discourse Markers." *Orality, Literacy, Memory in the Ancient Greek and Roman World*. Ed. E. A. Mackay. Leiden: Brill, 2008. 35-64.
- Bynum, David E. "Child's Legacy Enlarged: Oral Literary Studies at Harvard Since 1856." *Harvard Library Bulletin* 22 (1974): 237-67.
- Chafe, Wallace. *Discourse, Consciousness, and Time: the Flow and Displacement of Conscious Experience in Speaking and Writing*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1994.
- Elmer, David F. "Presentation Formulas in South Slavic Epic Song." *Oral Tradition* 24 (2009): 41-59.
- Fischer, Kerstin, ed. *Approaches to Discourse Particles*. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006.
- Foley, John Miles. *Homer's Traditional Art*. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1999.
- . *How to Read an Oral Poem*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2002.
- . *Traditional Oral Epic: The Odyssey, Beowulf, and the Serbo-Croatian Return Song*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1990.
- Hannay, Mike and Kroon, Caroline. "Acts and the Relationship Between Discourse and Grammar." *Functions of Language* 12 (2005): 87-124.
- Johnstone, Barbara. *Discourse Analysis*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002.
- de Jong, Irene J. F. *Narrators and Focalizers: The Presentation of the Story in the Iliad*. Amsterdam: Grüner, 1987.

- Jucker, Andreas H. and Ziv, Yael, eds. *Discourse Markers: Description and Theory*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1998.
- Labov, William. "The Transformation of Experience in Narrative Syntax." *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular*, 354-396. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1972.
- Levinson, Stephen C. *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983.
- Lord, Albert Bates, ed. *Serbocroatian Heroic Songs*, vol. 1. Cambridge: Harvard UP and the Serbian Academy of Sciences, 1953.
- , ed. *Serbocroatian Heroic Songs*, vol. 2. Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Sciences and Harvard UP, 1954.
- Mey, Jacob L. *Pragmatics: An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1993.
- Minchin, Elizabeth. *Homer and the Resources of Memory: Some Applications of Cognitive Theory to the Iliad and the Odyssey*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001.
- Norrick, Neal R. "Discourse Markers in Oral Narrative." *Journal of Pragmatics* 33 (2001): 849-78.
- Schiffrin, Deborah. *Discourse Markers*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987.
- Wichmann, Anne. *Intonation in Text and Discourse: Beginnings, Middles, and Ends*. Harlow, UK: Longman, 2000.
- Widdowson, H. G. 2007. *Discourse Analysis*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007.

